

**Evergreen Fire District  
Board of Trustees  
Meeting  
Meeting Minutes  
Regular Board Meeting of December 7th, 2020 – 6:00 pm**

**To Be Held Remotely via Google Meet:**

**Joining info:** Join with Google Meet  
[meet.google.com/cwp-cioy-kzd](https://meet.google.com/cwp-cioy-kzd)

Join by phone  
(US) [+1 337-441-4065](tel:+13374414065) (PIN: 567730475)

For public comment please email Board Chairman Brodie Verworn @[brodie@vitalogyeducation.com](mailto:brodie@vitalogyeducation.com)

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**

Chairman Verworn calls meeting to order at 6:18 pm.

**TRUSTEES PRESENT:** Brockman, DePaul and Connolly (via Google Meet) Fallon and Verworn (at Station 81)

**RECOGNIZE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:**

(none)

**EFD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE:**

Fire Marshal Covington, Fire Chief Williams, Lt. Jared Pitcher, Capt. James Boyce

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

*At this time, public may comment on any public matter that is not on the Agenda of the Meeting and that is within the jurisdiction of the District.  
(none)*

**FINANCIALS:**

**Approve August, September and October financials**

*Motion; Fallon to accept the June/July 7204 financial statements, reconciliations that have been revised based on the Flathead County completing their fiscal year 2020 audit having to do with cash and accruals; Second by Brockman; motion passes unanimously.*

*Motion; Fallon to approve the checks that were written for the months of August, September and October 2020 and accept the financial statements for the same months for all department accounts; Second by Brockman; motion passes unanimously.*

**PAST ITEMS/UPDATES:**

**1. Approve meeting minutes of October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

*Motion; Connolly to accept the minutes of October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020; Second by Fallon; motion passes by quorum (DePaul is offline for the vote).*

**2. Update on employee manual**

Chief Williams states items are still being identified in the manual that were previously missed and provided the example of the wording of 'vacation pay' and states some personnel have not been accruing their vacation based on the verbiage within the vacation policy. He states that there will be additional language in the employee handbook based on some issues (including Covid-19 i.e., quarantine timeline/pay) that have developed within the past week prior to the meeting. He anticipates at least a couple more weeks before a draft is ready for presentation. Fallon suggests just waiting until after January to expect a policy manual draft and asks if the Covid procedures will be incorporated throughout the body of the manual or if it will be a separate section that would be subject to different changes of the result of what was learned along the way. Chief Williams states he is under the impression that it will be an addendum that won't be included in the main body of the manual and would have the ability to change depending on circumstances. Verworn asks if he or Kim More has come across any defining cases or bench mark cases with Covid. Chief Williams states he has several questions regarding Covid that Kim nor



anyone else is able to answer at this point. Verworn asks if PPP or other financing is covering overtime and etc. Chief Williams states that the District received \$15,000 + during the first segment of the Cares Act that has been utilized and be reimbursed for PPE costs and etc. However, he just received notice from Flathead County finance who passed on to him something from the Secretary of State's Office and Governor Bullock that the Cares Act has now been suspended indefinitely. There will be no reimbursement for local government entities from this point forward. He states the Department has accumulated 'quite a bit of cost' that he intended on pushing through for reimbursement but due to the suspension of the program reimbursement is doubtful even though there is a surplus of 200 million dollars that is now unaccounted for at the State level.

3. **Review addendum/corrections to already approved minutes of the July 22<sup>nd</sup> special board meeting**  
*Fallon states he has read the addendum/corrections prepared by Cheri and has included page 1 and 2 of the data that had been provided at that meeting and will be included in the minutes of the current meeting to help explain the verbiage.*

*Motion; Fallon to accept the addendum to the July 22nd meeting that clarifies the portion of the minutes that need clarification and to make sure that the current minutes reflect page 4 of the packet in the handout he provided to the Chairman. (Fallon will email the data handout to Cheri.) ; Second by Connolly; motion passes by quorum (Brockman offline for the vote).*

4. **2019 Audit Discussion**

Chief Williams states that the District will need to vet out another auditor. Don Davies wrote a letter to him on December 2<sup>nd</sup> stating that the audit has been completed and realized that he has been overlooked for 2020 due to Covid and 'the extra work required under recent auditing standard changes' and has advised that the District look for another auditor who would be able to complete the 2020 audit 'in a more timely fashion'. Chief Williams states he is aware that Don has been planning to retire in the not so distant future and that his letter is not a reflection of anything negative regarding the District. The District has had a great working relationship with Don. Verworn asks if the District would be penalized for the late audit and Chief Williams states that he has not received notice of any penalty. Chief Williams states that Don did reiterate that the District will most likely run into more difficulty with another auditor regarding the use of QuickBooks as opposed to government accounting (Black Mountain, PeachTree etc) and will most likely result in more findings in greater detail for not participating in a government accounting program. DePaul asks if that is hurting the District and is told it is not hurting the District but is resulting in a consecutive finding each year which is not good but does not come with a penalty to the District (to his knowledge). Fallon states that currently the only finding that could be an issue is the fact that the District does not have all monies in the County Treasurer's office. He states it comes down to what percentage of the finances are outside of the County books and at June 30<sup>th</sup> was 14% whereas a year or two ago it may have been 60% (again guesstimating) due to 9428 (ambulance account). Fallon states this still did not impact the District's ability to get the bonds that were gotten several years ago. Brockman states his position is that findings do matter and that it does 'say something about us long term' and wants to minimize any findings and work towards coming into compliance with the recommendations. He suggests looking into JCCS or similar companies. Fallon states he prefers to consider a smaller accounting firm. Big accounting firms such as JCCS have larger administrative costs. Fallon will contact the smaller accounting firm used by Evergreen Water and Sewer to see if they can fit the District into their schedule. He states it may be difficult finding any accounting firm currently and that the District may have to realize that it will have a delinquent report and added costs but may find a little latitude as long as there is communication with the local government service bureau letting them know the audit is being done and by whom. Brockman suggests using someone local. Fallon states that he prefers to find someone who is used to special districts which are different from municipalities and school districts because Evergreen is considered a special district.

Fallon states he is opposed to the motion because the District should consider the accounting firm in St. Regis due to their familiarity with special districts which applies to Evergreen. He adds that he knows their cost is reasonable and there is no requirement to go out for a request for qualifications. He suggests moving forward with the request only if St. Regis is not able to perform that audit. Connolly supports Fallon's reasoning for reaching out to the firm in St. Regis first because of their experience with special districts and the fact they are also on the list. Connolly addresses Brockman's concerns and states he believes Fallon's conversation with the firm in St. Regis would include the concept of moving forward with an acceptable system. Fallon states the firm's license would be in jeopardy if done any other way. DePaul supports Brockman's position. Fallon states the default is always to go out for request for qualifications which is an administrative decision and doesn't need Board approval. He states Board approval is required



only to approve who is accepted to perform the audit. Fallon addresses page 23 of the audit and clarifies the verbiage used. He states the primary purpose is to let everyone know that everything is insured and that the District doesn't have any money at risk except for the money at the County of whom the District is relying on to have a risk management program in place. Even though the District may not have all monies at the County; it is all insured. Fallon points Item #4 at the bottom of page 23 regarding inter fund transfer and balances and states an auditor's question for the finding would be "Should the District Board make a motion to waive the various fund liabilities and expenses that would have been reimbursed from the respective funds?" Fallon states he will email Don Davies. Fallon also points out the audit mentions a 15 year loan for SCBA. Chief Williams states that is not correct. Fallon notes he will also have Don Davies make that correction. Fallon states the last 5 pages talk about the findings and points out that Ashley should be doing the AFR and not Don Davies. He suggests that they talk with Ashley regarding this finding. Another finding was in regard to the accounting system which Chief Williams has already previously addressed (cost of Black Mountain accounting system vs. QuickBooks). The last finding Fallon discusses is one that addresses the 14% of monies outside of the County which he feels the District should continue 'as is'. He states that the amount of funds in the outside accounts have lessened since June 30<sup>th</sup>.

*Motion; Brockman to send out requests for qualifications from the list Fallon has provided for the 2019-2020 audit; second by DePaul; motion is tied with 2 trustees voting for (Brockman, DePaul) and 2 trustees (Fallon, Connolly) opposed. Chairman Verworn breaks the tie and votes no on Brockman's motion; motion does not pass.*

#### **NEW ITEMS:**

##### **1. Surplus Equipment Discussion**

2000 F350 Ambulance #823 which currently has 307,000 miles with repair issues that have affected its continued operational abilities and is no longer trust-worthy of long distance transports. It is currently used for IFT's with safety issue concerns during winter travel transports. It is the second ambulance ever purchased by the District in 2009 and never intended to be in operation longer than 5 or 6 years. Chief Williams would like it declared surplus so it can be used as trade-in on a replacement ambulance. He states the only trade-in value of the ambulance is its front bumper which was custom designed to withstand hitting a large animal.

*Motion; Fallon to declare the ambulance surplus; second by Connolly; motion passes unanimously.*

##### **2. Discussion for Funding of Personnel Mental Health Care**

Chairman Verworn and Trustee Connolly presented information to Chief Williams regarding this funding. He states his first thought is to fund it with wildland fire funds. The individual Connolly recommends for counseling is \$125 per hour for a 1 hour session but recommends budgeting \$150 per hour for personnel who may not want to use the recommended counselor. Chief Williams states his concerns with a reimbursement-type of program is that mental health is of the utmost confidential and reimbursement involves receipts and getting others involved; who's going to whom; to which doctor and what for. He states the original plan was to identify one qualified person and retain that person who would build a rapport with personnel and whose diagnoses etc., would not be run through insurance and would not be on record as other departments have done this and have been successful with it. He states the question is how much money is needed to initiate the program for the first year and asks if \$7,000.00 would be adequate. DePaul asks about the legalities and if Chief Williams knows for sure other departments are doing things this way (off record etc). Chief Williams states that it would be properly vetted out and that there would be no risk to the District. Currently, the State of Montana does not recognize PTSD as a covered health crisis. Verworn adds that in order to be covered by work comp an individual would have to literally be harmful to themselves and be admitted to an entity like ER or Pathways. Connolly states the person he has been speaking with is a licensed and certified counselor and not a psychiatrist and cannot prescribe any drugs/medications. He states that making a counselor available and not forcing personnel to see someone results in not having to have the results recorded in the employer records and does not require being reported to HIPPA. He feels that a 6 or 7 month period would provide an adequate time frame to test the program. Connolly suggests that Chief Williams contact the counselor who can provide answers for any additional questions. Chief Williams states he would do that. Brockman is in favor of the program and agrees with Chief Williams that it should be counseling with one therapist whom the District retains. Covington states that there does need to be something in place that allows for the involuntary participant when being 'fit for duty' is in question similar to what is done in law enforcement. Chief Williams agrees with Covington and states he agrees also with Verworn's mention of a 'checklist' of criteria displayed by



any personnel. Trustees are in agreement with Covington in getting the involuntary aspect into policy but also providing personnel with the needed voluntary service.

Chief Williams states 2 decisions need to be made; 1) Are participants limited to one counselor and 2) how much money is needed. Connolly states that he has calculated approximately \$8,400.00 would be needed to start; \$150 per hour at 4 to 6 sessions (4 – 6 hours) is what is generally needed with most likely less than half of the personnel using the service between now and the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2021). Fallon states that with the money coming from the wild land fires (approximately \$58,000.00) he suggests \$14,000.00 going into Fund 4212. He calculates the approximate cost of counseling at \$30,000; \$125.00 x 40 personnel x 6 hours (sessions per person). He suggests making up to 6 hours of mental health counseling available to all personnel with the District paying 100% of the cost. There would be a bill once a month from the counselor. Chief Williams suggests making \$10,000.00 available for counseling stating he feels less than half of personnel will participate. He agrees with \$14,000.00 into 4212 and states a wildfire line item budget needs to be established for the remainder of unspecified wildland fire monies because there is a need to purchase wild fire related equipment and radios. Fallon states \$14,000.00 to 4212; \$14,000.00 to wildland purchases; \$30,000.00 to mental health for personnel.

*Motion; Fallon to transfer \$1400.00 to 4212 and set aside \$30,000.00 for mental health and \$14,000.00 for wildland purchases contingent upon receiving the full \$58,000.00 in wild land fire revenue; second by Connolly; motion passes unanimously.*

### **Ambulance Purchase**

Chief Williams states the ambulance that was moved to surplus will now be used as trade-in and presents an invoice from Apgar Ambulance for a 2011 Ford F450 which is a 4 wheel drive, Type I ambulance which currently has 101,000 miles with low engine hours (previously an air force ambulance) and comes with a Stryker power load system in it which is a \$25,000.00 value and would replace #823. It will be used for long distance inter facility transports. Chief Williams states the current budget for ambulance is \$150,000 with the replacement costing \$45,000.00. Chief Williams states he is requesting an additional \$5,000.00 that will go towards completing the power load system with the purchase of a device that connects to the track system on the floor of the replacement ambulance; device is \$3,000.00. There would be an additional cost of \$400.00 for labor to install it. Other costs would be to install the existing radio from the surplus ambulance into the new ambulance (approximately \$1000.00) DePaul asks if there is anything newer and Chief Williams states there is but price goes up exponentially which would limit the District to replacing one ambulance for the next 2 years. Verworn asks if there is a warranty for drive train etc and Chief Williams states there isn't. Apgar would do the repairs and maintenance for the ambulance so would stay local. Fallon asks how many ambulances were purchased used vs. new to date. Chief Williams states one ambulance was purchased with a grant and 4 or 5 were purchased used through Apgar with the exception of 1 ambulance on which the engine failed. Chief Williams states that Apgar is the premiere used ambulance company in the US as well as internationally. Fallon is in support of purchasing the ambulance through Apgar.

*Motion; Fallon for the expenditure of up to \$50,000.00 to purchase the ambulance from Apgar as well as the peripheral equipment with Funds coming from 7250; second by Connolly; motion passes unanimously.*

### **3. Fire Chief Purchasing Authorization**

Chief Williams states he is not clear on what his purchasing authorization is because it changes with the membership of the Board and situations. He asks the Board to clarify his limit as the Trustees approve an annual budget but he still finds he has to come to the Board for various expenditures and uses the example of the Apgar ambulance purchase discussed earlier in the meeting. He states that most other Fire Chiefs do not operate this way. He states it's not that he minds doing this but wants clear and definitive guidelines on limitations as he has other expenditures that need to be made and needs to be clear on when he needs to seek pre approval which often times creates unnecessary work for him when the budget items has already been approved. He states he understands the Board's concerns and also understands that the Board trusts him. He states that in the budget the Board approved \$150,000.00 for an ambulance. It doesn't state he can't buy 3 used ambulances totaling \$150,000.00. He doesn't understand the need to have to come to the Board to approve a \$45,000 or \$50,000 ambulance purchase when \$150,000 has been approved for that budget. Brockman states he is willing to help draft a proposal for policy. Fallon states he doesn't see the need to change. He acknowledges that it may be frustrating for Chief Williams at times but that it keeps the Board fully informed. He states the Board has full responsibility for expenditures of the District and Trustees need to know how money is being spent and that requires an approval process beyond the budget (a



proposed amount.) He states the Board is approving a revenue budget not an expense budget because you can't spend more than what is brought in, in regard to 7204. The Board is responsible for approving checks and needs to know what normal expenditures are (utilities, payroll, etc.) Fallon states that an approval process actually protects Chief Williams as it sanctions the decisions made and uses the school board as an example. Chief Williams doesn't dispute Fallon but states what he is asking for is a clear limit on an expenditure amount. Brockman states that school districts and fire districts are different and have different needs. He does not agree with Fallon and states the Fire Chief may be too restricted in some aspects. Brockman states all of the gray areas need to be more black and white and that there needs to be a little more structure. DePaul agrees in that he feels the Board has a tendency to micro-manage too much. Connolly agrees with Brockman and volunteers to help construct the policy proposal.

#### **Personnel Christmas Gift Authorization**

4. Chief Williams states the annual Christmas Party will not happen this year due to the Covid restrictions and in lieu of the average annual cost (\$3800.00, typically out of Fund 4212) he proposes a \$100.00 check to each person which would total \$3900.00. He states that is part of the \$14,000.00 that has been approved to be transferred to Fund 4212. Verworn asks if personnel will still get turkeys this year and Chief Williams states the checks are in lieu of everything. He states this will also be the last year that the EMS stipends are given out due to bringing the educational component in-house. Verworn asks if the Department is still doing the luminaries and Chief Williams states they will be for sale. Chief Williams requests authorization for the \$100.00 checks to be written from Fund 4212.

*Motion; Connolly to approve the personnel Christmas gift authorization; second by DePaul; motion passes unanimously.*

#### **PROPOSALS:**

##### **Wildfire Revenue Expenditures**

This item has been resolved in the allotments proposed and approved earlier in the meeting.

#### **RESOLUTIONS:**

(none)

#### **CHIEF'S REPORT:**

Chief Williams states the reports are not going to be accurate due to a back log of calls from September through November that are still needing to be entered into Emergency Reporting. He states the call volume is still in an upward trend. He states there will be an increase in both Fire and EMS for 2020 and approximates 3300 calls which is still an increase over last year. He states IFT's have been 'crazy busy and taken on a life of their own' and staffing is an issue.

##### **1. September and October 2020 Call Volume**

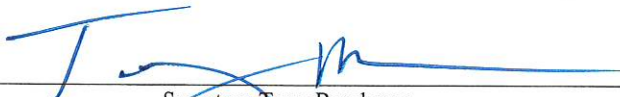
- A) **Comparison Incident Count by Weekday/Hour (all zones) for September and October 2020**
- B) **Comparison Incident Statistics for September and October 2020**

#### **Adjourn @ 8:36 p.m.**

*The President of the Board of Trustees, as presiding officer of any meeting of the Board of Trustees, may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy; and, then, if, and only if, the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains; and, in that event, the meeting must be open.*



Chairman Brodie Verworn or Vice Chair Randy DePaul



Secretary Tony Brockman